Horace W. Morris, Associate Director for Program for the Washington Urban League, spent five days in July in the city of his youth, defending his family and searching for the answers to the horror that was Newark. Least we forget the summer past and the summer to come, the Urban League would like to share with you this picture from the memory of one of our own staff members in a city not unlike our own.

NEWARK - LIKE IT WAS

". . . THE SECOND DAY OF THE RIOT I was to visit with my sisters, living in another part of the city, on my way to the Newark Airport for my return to Washington. As we reached the car, we noticed a crowd of approximately 60 people standing in front of my stepfather's apartment building watching looters on Prince Street and Springfield Avenue two blocks away."

"As we were about to enter the automobile, three squad cars of Newark Police came south on Mercer Street, turned left toward Springfield Avenue, and stopped directly across the street. Persons looting a furniture store at the next corner began to run. About three of them ran by the police in our direction. The police turned and without warning began firing at point blank range toward us and the group of persons directly behind us. The four of us, (myself, two brothers, and my stepfather) ran toward the apartment building approximately twenty feet away. My stepfather fell directly in front of me. I assisted him to his feet, but he fell again. This time my brother Virgil came to his assistance and was knocked to the ground with wounds in the left leg and right forearm. The remaining brother and I managed to drag them into the vestibule, which was jammed with 60 to 70 frightened and angry Negroes. During the period I vividly recall the screams of women and children and desperate efforts of men rushing them to the shelter of the building. I also recall the whine of rifle and revolver shots striking the building, and the burning sensation of my left leg which I later discovered was caused by the "nick" of a policeman's bullet."

"Under a flag of truce, we finally managed to get the police to hold their fire so that we could bring out the dead and wounded. A group of men assisted us in carrying my wounded relatives from the building. The ambulance arrived shortly thereafter. As we placed the two men in the vehicle, I yelled to the sargent that they were killing innocent people. His answer was, "Tell the black bastards to stop shooting at us." I replied, "They don't have guns, no one is shooting at you." The sargent yelled, "You shut-up, there's a sniper on the roof." My final remark was, "Then why are you firing at ground level?" As I was getting into the ambulance, I noticed a white priest in the group helping us. I shouted to him, "Father, tell those policemen they're shooting women and children. Get them to stop."

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A group of people were standing in front of the ambulance preventing it from moving on. I shouted for them to move, but someone said, "wait a minute." The ambulance doors opened and a young Negro man of about twenty six got in carrving an unconscious child in his arms. The child had been shot in the left eye. Enroute to Newark City Hospital the young father said the three year old was wounded while looking from a seventh story window. In a state of shock, he silently rocked his injured child."

Mr. Morris's stepfather died later that same evening in the Newark City Hospital without his family being allowed to see him. The League's Associate Director for Program saw many other deaths during his five day stay in Newark. Recounting his total experience, Mr. Morris said:

"The force and brutality of the local police and state troopers was unbelievable. The hatred I experienced and observed in the faces of those charged with the enforcing of law, is indelibly printed in my memory. My exposure to such raw, intense hatred, and the cruel, wanton murder of human beings, makes the memory of those five days in Newark seem almost unreal."

"But those days were real. America's road to racial harmony looms long and arduous. For the most part white America has yet to begin the journey. Those of us committed to the task of equalizing life's chances for black America will be in business for a long, long time."

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A UGF Agency, affiliated with
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